DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 522 FL 027 640

AUTHOR	Li, Mingsheng
TITLE	Roles, Expectations and Pedagogical Awareness: A Case Study of Expatriate English Teachers in China.
PUB DATE	2002-07-00
NOTE	45p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Australian-New Zealand Communication Association (Queensland, Australia, July 10-12, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	*Cultural Awareness; Culturally Relevant Education; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; *Interpersonal Communication; Second Language Instruction; Speech Communication; Student Attitudes; Student Participation; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Competencies; Teacher Expectations of Students; *Teacher Role; *Teacher Student Relationship; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*China; *Expatriates

ABSTRACT

This study reviews the disparities in role assumptions and expectations that underlie the classroom communication between Chinese learners and expatriate teachers in China. The central issue is the miscommunication of teacher-student role conceptualizations and expectations. Differing role assumptions predate teachers' teaching methods and students' conceptions of learning. Expatriate teachers with little knowledge of the Chinese cultural and educational contexts have difficulty in interpreting their roles as teachers and fulfilling the expectations these roles entail, and therefore have difficulty in finding a "fit" in their teaching. It is argued that pedagogy is context-dependent. Teaching methods that are recognized as successful in the country where they originate cannot achieve similar results when applied to a culturally different classroom setting that sets different social and psychological dimensions around the teacher-student relationship. It is suggested that expatriate teachers need to develop a repertoire of professional teaching communication skills, especially in language, pedagogies, and culture, to enable them to understand their roles as teachers in a cross-cultural setting; to examine their cultural values, beliefs, and role concepts; to adapt their teaching to the needs of students; to establish a cultural synergy; and to find a pedagogical fit in intercultural classroom communication. (Contains 60 references.) (Author/SM)

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Roles, Expectations and Pedagogical Awareness:

A Case Study of Expatriate English Teachers in China

Dr Mingsheng Li

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Email: li.ming@openpolytechnic.ac.nz

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Contents

ABSTRACT **1**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: **3**

INTRODUCTION **4**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE **5**

THE STUDY **8**

FINDINGS **9**

IMPORTANCE OF EXPATRIATE TEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT 9

EXPATRIATE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PARTICIPATION 10

CHINESE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EXPATRIATE TEACHERS' TEACHING 11

DISCUSSION **14**

ROLE CONCEPTS AND ROLE EXPECTATIONS IN THE CHINESE CLASSROOM 15

ESL AND EFL DISTINCTIONS 18

THE LEARNER PARTICIPATION DISCOURSE 21

The oral discourse versus the written discourse *22*

Autonomy and creativity *25*

TEACHING COMPETENCE 28

Language awareness *29*

Pedagogical and cultural awareness *31*

RECOMMENDATIONS **33**

CONCLUSION **35**

REFERENCES **37**

Acknowledgements:

The author is very grateful to Dr Raymond Young and Dr Chamsy el-Ojeili and to my two reviewers: Konai Thaman, Professor of Pacific Education & Culture and UNESCO Chair in Teacher Education and Culture, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji, and Mr Trevor Landers, Lecturer, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, for their valuable and insightful comments and suggestions.

Abstract

This paper, based on a study carried out by the author, reviews the disparities in role assumptions and expectations that underlie the classroom communication between Chinese learners and expatriate teachers in China. The central issue, the paper argues, is the miscommunication of teacher-student role conceptualisations and expectations. Differing role assumptions pre-date teachers' teaching methods and students' conceptions of learning. Expatriate teachers with little knowledge of the Chinese cultural and educational contexts have difficulty in interpreting their roles as teachers and fulfilling the expectations these roles entail, and therefore have difficulty in finding a 'fit' in their teaching. It is argued that pedagogy is context-dependent. Teaching methods that are recognised as successful in the country where they originate cannot achieve similar results when applied to a culturally different classroom setting that sets different social and psychological dimensions around the teacher-student relationship. It is suggested that expatriate teachers need to develop a repertoire of professional teaching communication skills, especially in language, pedagogies and culture, to enable them to understand their roles as teachers in a cross-cultural setting, to examine their cultural values, beliefs and role concepts, to adapt their teaching to the needs of the students, to establish a cultural synergy, and to find a pedagogical fit in intercultural classroom communication.

Key words: language teaching, expatriate teachers in China, culture, and communication

Introduction

Every year, thousands of English native speakers are involved in English language teaching (ELT) in secondary schools and universities in China. They have played an important role in updating China's ELT profession by introducing new teaching methods, new ideas, the latest research results, and Western educational philosophies. In the process of intercultural interactions, however, clashes in cultural values, beliefs, perceptions, and expectations between expatriate teachers and Chinese students have caused severely problematic interactions and less than observable outcomes. This paper, drawing upon the data from my own survey conducted in China in 1997, attempts to review the disparities in role beliefs and pedagogical expectations that underlie the conflicts.

A large body of the research literature related to the studies of Chinese learners (much of which has been conducted by Western teachers, researchers and scholars) has contributed significantly to the understanding of Chinese learners, their attitudes towards teaching and learning, their classroom behaviours, and their conceptualisation of learning and teaching. To my knowledge, there is a paucity of systematic and empirical research that may enable Chinese learners' voices to be heard or studied. There is a shortage in the literature on how Chinese students perceive teaching by expatriate teachers in China. This paper, I hope, will help the voice to be heard. I will first review the relevant literature, then report on the major findings from the survey, and finally examine the implications of this study.

Review of literature

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping people's beliefs, roles, role expectations and attitudes in such a way that they develop culturally prescribed interpretative frameworks which affect their readings and interpretations of the meanings of their behaviours and those of others (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998).

Central to the teacher-learner classroom interactions are the archetypal teacher-learner roles (Hofstede, 1986) mediated by the pedagogy adopted by the teacher (Vercoe, 1998). Widdowson (1987) describes roles as 'kinds of conventional script, or prescript, which constrain the individual person to assume a persona in conformity to normal and expected patterns of behaviour' (p. 83). Role norms prescribe and regulate sets of behaviours for persons holding the role (Biddle & Thomas, 1966). The person assuming a particular role is expected to fulfil the expectations of the prescribers (Connell, 1979), who remain anonymous in the social and cultural context (Clarke & Silberstein, 1988). Role sets and expectations, the givens of interaction, institutionalised prior to communication, are shaped by cultural values and beliefs shared by the society (Stryker & Statham, 1985) and are grounded in the subjective world of the people performing their prescribed roles (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Each role performer develops a role concept as an approach to 'the social structure which locates its basic constraints in stereotyped interpersonal expectations' (Connell, 1979, p. 9). There is, therefore, a strong social influence in roles, expectations and behaviour.

Wright (1987) suggests that expectations and behaviours associated with the prescribed roles are automatically intertwined, and that the role is governed both by our expectations and the actual behaviour (p. 5) and by the expectations of others. Expectations emerge from social norms, communication rules, inter-group attitudes and stereotypes (Gudykunst, 1994). Expectations are socialised and internalised by individuals to form part of the personality, which consists of a repertoire of learned roles (Stryker and Statham, 1985). The role concept acquired in the socialising process becomes a guideline for the individual's social transactions (Wright, 1987; Widdowson, 1987). The match or mismatch of role expectations is ultimately determined by the individual's perceptions and the interpretations of all performers involved in the role frame (Giroux, 1992). According to Stryker & Statham (1985), the level of consensus on role expectations is determined by the degree of clarity of role identity defined and interpreted by the participants, and role conflicts can arise when people from different cultural backgrounds define and interpret their role identity and role expectations by using their individual cultural cues.

Embedded in socially constructed ways of life and governed by cultural and social norms, the interpretative framework can generate communication problems if different participants lack a knowledge of the set of cultural rules and norms used to interpret one another's conduct (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). This is especially true of intercultural communication, where 'the problem for intercultural understanding then becomes a problem of incommensurability between sets of rules' (Young, 1996, p. 35), and where people's behaviours do not seem to conform to existing values, beliefs, and role expectations (Trenholm & Jensen, 1996).

Disparities in interpretations can result in different role understandings and expectations in the interactional process, by which different participants 'create, relate, organise and realise meaning' (Riley, 1985, p. 2). Between teachers and students, there exists a role boundary that seriously influences their role identity and expectations (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Craig, 1995), and role conflicts are likely to arise when the boundary is breached and expectations are unfulfilled (Coleman, 1996; Widdowson, 1987).

These culturally based expectations, derived from social norms and communication rules, intergroup attitudes and stereotypes, are rarely explicitly articulated (Gudykunst, 1994). Teachers and students act out the roles assigned by their cultural norms, roles that are so internalised and routinised that they are generally not noticeable, and that become visible and problematic only when the prescribed sanctions are violated (Prabhu, 1992). Both teachers and students judge the appropriateness of their actions and their behaviours on the basis of these expectations and their own frame of reference.

In such a communication process, the degree of the congruence of teacher-student role expectations mediated by pedagogy is significant in the success or failure of language teaching and learning (Cortazzi, 1990). However, pedagogy is context-dependent; it is not value-free (Ellsworth, 1997). It is a cultural product that contains socially approved methods, and the enactment of pedagogy is therefore an imposition of cultural values by an arbitrary power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Teachers, serving as pedagogical transmitters, are expected to transmit that which fits the socially approved pedagogical sanctions, and the pedagogical receivers are expected to receive and internalise the transmitted message. Pedagogy is shaped by the specific cultural values

and ideology suited to the society where the pedagogy originates (Barrow, 1990). Pedagogy, a symbolic control, maintains its own cultural identity and cultural reproduction in its implementation (Berstein & Solomon, 1999). It is derived from a conceptualisation of the local structural conditions, power and control, ideology, and discursive rules that generate practices of inclusion and exclusion (Holliday, 1997; Berstein, 1996). As a result, teachers enacting pedagogies transmit and reinforce the cultural values embedded in every teaching approach (Kelen, 2002). Therefore, whether a pedagogical fit can be found or not in a cross-cultural setting depends on the teacher's teaching professionalism and cultural awareness (Wright & Bolitho,1993, 1997; Barrow, 1990; Holliday, 1997).

The study

This paper is based on the data from my own survey in China in 1997 carried out for my doctoral research at La Trobe University, Australia. A case study was conducted in 1997 in nine Chinese southeastern tertiary institutions in the People's Republic of China. Four groups of people participated in the survey:

- Expatriate English teachers (24)
- Chinese university English language major students (342: year 1 = 52, year 2 = 84, year 3 = 116, year 4 = 78, postgraduate class = 12)
- Chinese teachers (62)
- Chinese administrators (15).

The survey indicates that 10 (41.5%) out of 24 expatriate teachers (12 with MA degrees, 12 with BA degrees) held relevant qualifications in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), English, or education. Five of them had taught in China for more than 2 years, 12 for more than 1 year, seven for less than one year.

In that study, qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires, in the Likert five-point scale) research approaches were used collaboratively to develop lines of inquiry in an attempt to provide multiple sources of more accurate evidence than that provided in a single source of information. However, for the sake of brevity in this paper, I will use the results of the quantitative questionnaires for both Chinese students and expatriate teachers and only some of the interview data to explore the key issues related to Chinese learners' perceptions of the teaching by expatriate teachers.

Findings

Importance of expatriate teachers' involvement

There is a consensus among expatriate teachers, Chinese students, teachers and administrators that expatriate teachers in China can help to upgrade China's ELT programme to match Western educational standards by introducing new teaching methodologies, offering new subject courses, and creating an authentic language learning environment in the Chinese classroom. It is generally believed that expatriate teachers provide Chinese students with broad perspectives and a new cultural understanding. New

teaching alternatives, in a context where traditional values are still heavily emphasised, stimulate students' interest in learning and expose them to intellectual and cultural challenges. The expatriate teachers' cultures, values, customs, and etiquette enhance students' linguistic and cultural awareness. It is important to point out here that the perceptions of the expatriate teachers' participation is tinged with idealised role expectations and assumptions, based on the 'native speaker fallacy' (Phillipson, 1992), in which the native speaker is assumed to be the best teacher and the ideal cultural and normative model.

Expatriate teachers' perceptions of their participation

In spite of their professional training in their own countries, only 8.3% of expatriate teachers agreed that their training was adequate in Chinese educational contexts. The survey revealed that 83.3% of teachers found that the teaching methods and course content they introduced into Chinese classrooms did not match the expectations of the Chinese students. Two thirds of the expatriate teachers believed that adapting Western teaching approaches (especially the communicative approach and the interactive approach as defined by some expatriate teachers interviewed) to meet the needs of the Chinese students became extremely important. They found that direct transfer of Western teaching approaches was naive and unrealistic. In the views of many expatriate teachers (91.7%), unmatched expectations had contributed to serious misunderstandings and impacted negatively on the teacher-learner relationships. All expatriate teachers agreed that in order to match Chinese students' expectations, teachers should have a broad range

of teaching methods. On the one hand, many expatriate teachers (57.4%) were convinced that traditional Chinese teaching approaches stifled Chinese students' creative potential; on the other hand they (91.7%) were absolutely sure that integrating Chinese teaching approaches with Western ones was vital to successful pedagogical implementations. This suggests that these expatriate teachers had realised that there were elements in Chinese teaching approaches that would benefit their teaching in China. However, such an integration, dependent on expatriate teachers' own understanding, takes time and effort because there were many cultural, social and political constraints (such as the Chinese state examination system), as many expatriate teachers (58.3%) found. Adaptation did not guarantee successful teaching and communication with the students. Although 67.7% of expatriate teachers claimed that their teaching was successful or extremely successful, 58.3% of them concluded that their role as a native speaker teacher was not utilised to the maximum, mainly because of the vast differences in role identities and expectations between the expatriate teachers, the Chinese students, and the Chinese university administrators.

Chinese students' perceptions of expatriate teachers' teaching

Most Chinese students (86.5%) agreed that expatriate teachers were able to help them improve their listening and cultural understanding for one simple reason: they were native speakers and representatives of their cultures. Nearly half (46.4%) of them believed that expatriate teachers' participation played an important role in updating the ELT profession in China. Many (50.9%) agreed that there were elements in the pedagogy

introduced by expatriate teachers that Chinese teachers should learn, such as the active and interactive classroom atmosphere, friendly teacher-student relationships, and some new ideas, theories, and educational philosophies.

However, the Chinese students appeared to have a mixed attitude towards expatriate teachers' ELT contribution. It seemed to some (33.4%) that there was no point in employing English native speakers like those who were teaching them, except as a symbolic gesture of the institution's openness to the outside world. The presence of English native speakers was often seen as 'window-dressing'. The interview data suggests that in their view these expatriate teachers, earning four to eight times more than the local Chinese teachers who might have earned higher degrees in the West, were not worth what they were paid.

More than half of the Chinese students (57.3%) felt that teaching by expatriate teachers, though interesting, could not help them much in gaining the knowledge and skills they wished to acquire. The survey also shows that nearly half of the students found that teaching by expatriate teachers was unsystematic in terms of curriculum design, lesson planning, course delivery and assessment. Some (40.4%) claimed that, except for the help they received with their oral English, it was not worth their time and effort to attend expatriate teachers' classes, because, as noted by 54.7% of students, these teachers did not know or respond to their difficulties, learning needs and expectations.

Nearly one third of the students (33.1%) found that expatriate teachers' teaching methods and techniques did not suit their needs. Many (58.9%) felt very disappointed with expatriate teachers, and some (25.2%) even asserted that expatriate teachers wasted their time and effort because they could not learn anything from them in class.

In contrast, 74.5% of them were sure that Chinese teachers could better understand their learning difficulties and thus meet their expectations. In spite of expatriate teachers' superiority and authority as native speakers, 42.8% of the students preferred lessons given by Chinese teachers. Nearly two thirds (63.6%) reported that they could learn more in Chinese teachers' classes. Many (71.9%) suggested that if these expatriate teachers had known some Chinese language, they might have been in a better position to understand learners' needs and expectations.

The cross-tabulation of the data from the questionnaire (see the following table) indicates that level of satisfaction of the Chinese students decreased with the increase of exposure to teaching by the expatriate teachers, that is, the longer Chinese students were taught by expatriate teachers, the lower the level of student satisfaction with the teaching. For the first-year students, the level of satisfaction remained relatively high because they were curious about foreign people and foreign things. But their curiosity could not be sustained when they realised that their expectations were unfulfilled. These expectations, however, seemed invisible to all the participants – teachers, students and administrators. Thus, even at the last stage of their university studies before graduation and after years of experimentation, these students still found that their unarticulated expectations remained unmet. Consequently, their early positive attitudes to teaching by expatriate teachers changed to disappointment, frustration, bitterness, and hostility.

Table 1: A cross-tabulation of Chinese students' views towards expatriate teachers' teaching

Chinese students' views	***Year 1***	***Year 4***
I prefer Chinese teachers' teaching.	30.8%	79.1%
Expatriate teachers' teaching is disappointing.	1.9%	56.4%
I can learn more in Chinese teachers' classes than in expatriate teachers' classes.	48.1%	91.9%
Expatriate teachers' teaching cannot match my expectations.	13.5%	74.2%
Expatriate teachers' teaching techniques do not suit my needs.	13.4%	71.0%
Chinese teachers adopt better teaching techniques than expatriate teachers.	3.2%	44.3%
Chinese teaching methods suit me better than the methods introduced by expatriate teachers.	28.9%	62.9%
Expatriate teachers do not know what our learning needs and expectations are.	32.7%	79.0%
Few expatriate teachers have lived up to our expectations.	38.4%	82.2%

Discussion

It was pointed out earlier that pedagogy is context-dependent. Changes in contexts require changes in role concepts, role expectations, and communication skills. The survey shows that many expatriate teachers recognised the importance of adapting their teaching

methods to meet the needs of the local students. However, adaptation involves many cultural factors, such as understanding the local culture of learning, educational philosophy, learning and teaching theories, role theories, and role expectations. Congruence can be very difficult to achieve when teachers and students do not share the same cultural values, which shape their perceptions and frames of reference. In spite of their sincerity and efforts to adapt, expatriate teachers, especially those with little knowledge of Chinese culture and language, can rarely find a fit in their pedagogical implementations.

The following discussion will further highlight some of the important issues raised by this survey. I will first describe role concepts and expectations in Chinese classroom communication. Then I will discuss the importance of the ESL and EFL distinction and some issues related to the learner participation discourse. Finally, I will outline some aspects of teachers' communication skills in intercultural communication, particularly language, cultural and pedagogical awareness.

Role concepts and role expectations in the Chinese classroom

When expatriate teachers teach in China, they expect, explicitly or implicitly, Chinese students to conform to the teachers' cultural norms as to what it means to be a teacher and a student. At the same time, Chinese students also expect their teachers to conform to the Chinese classroom protocols as to what it means be a teacher and a student. Consequently, in one classroom there are different expectations because the role of a teacher or a student has to play remains the interpretation of each member involved in the

interaction. Expatriate teachers and Chinese students communicate using different sets of interpretative frameworks. These are based on different frames of reference, which inevitably results in communication barriers.

Traditionally in China, the teacher's role has been socially prescribed as that of a model, a knowledge transmitter, a learning guide, an authority, an expert, a nurturer, and a virtuoso, and the student's role as that of a receiver, a follower, an apprentice, and an audience (Kelen, 2002; Paine, 1990; Ross, 1993; Brick, 1991). The role expectations result in teaching methods that are teacher-guided, text-centred, knowledge-based, and examination-oriented (Ward, 2001; Kelen, 2002). The teacher-student relationship is also hierarchically structured.

In the Chinese educational context, the teacher as role model is responsible for the progress and achievement of students, and the teacher's skilful management of classroom activities and performance expertise become social expectations. The teacher, with the whole learning blueprint in mind, decides what to teach and how to teach. In order to achieve professional perfection (an idealised role expectation), teachers are expected to be actors, spending years preparing for the final stage performance in the classroom (Paine, 1990). It is the teacher's performing skills that count. When the actor is performing, the audience does not expect any errors in the performance, which it assumes will be coherently and meaningfully timed and organised. The performer on the stage has scripts to work from. However, expatriate teachers in China act out their parts without any visible scripts or broad guidelines. They play a game without knowing the rules that exist in the students' subjective world and routinised learning activities, and the game rules they bring with them do not apply in Chinese educational contexts.

The most important role prescribed in Chinese educational philosophy is the teacher's teaching performance in knowledge transmission through the use of textbooks. Teachers, as well as textbooks, are viewed as the main sources of knowledge (Brick, 1991). In the Chinese epistemological view, knowledge is believed to reside in the teacher-expert and authority-textbook. Teachers use textbooks as a source to prepare lessons, organise classroom activities, systematically transmit the knowledge, and assess students' learning outcomes. For students, textbooks are an inseparable part of their learning. The teacher's main task is to transfer knowledge mainly from textbooks to students, while acting as a moral and intellectual model. The teacher's authority is established on his/her profound knowledge of the subject and his/her techniques in the delivery of it. The student's primary learning task is, therefore, to master the knowledge that the teacher presents from textbooks, which is expected to be explicated by the teacher in a logical, systematic and interlocked way. Such a practice reinforces the teacher's authority and the teacher-student relationship. Seeing themselves as part of the hierarchy, Chinese students rarely find autonomy comfortable. Conversely, expatriate teachers may feel frustrated working within such a hierarchical culture. Expatriate teaching that does not use any textbooks, handouts, or guidelines seriously violates the perceived role concepts and role expectations of Chinese learners. For example, one of the students reported that expatriate teachers preferred chatting, talking and conversations in their teaching, teaching without any purpose, any textbooks, and any preparation. She asserted that such purposeless and irresponsible teaching could not help the students to reach a high level of proficiency. The theme that expatriate teachers did not use textbooks

kept emerging in other interviews. To the Chinese students, these expatriate teachers failed to play their roles as teachers (see more discussions in 5.3).

Misunderstandings of, and conflicts in, role identity and role expectations can have strongly negative effects upon teaching and learning. Yet they are unavoidable because both expatriate teachers and Chinese students have scant knowledge of each other's culture. Teachers and students interact according to their respective role concepts, role expectations and invisible agendas, by which they evaluate the appropriateness of their approaches to teaching and learning.

Conflicts in role identity and role expectations were found to exist in expatriate teachers' transference of teaching approaches that are popular and probably successful in ESL (English as a second language) contexts into Chinese EFL (English as a foreign language) contexts, and in their adoption of the learner participation discourse in their classroom interactions. These issues will be further explored in the following two sections.

ESL and EFL distinctions

It is reasonable to argue that English is English wherever and however it is taught or learned. However, it is the learning and teaching contexts that make the difference. There is a huge difference between the way English is taught in English-speaking countries (ESL) and the way it is taught in non-English-speaking countries (EFL). This difference derives from

- the make-up of the student population

- the purposes of learning
- the learning tasks
- the requirements of language proficiency
- the quality and quantity of language interactions
- the socio-cultural contexts in which teaching and learning take place
- the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic processes involved in the learners' building-up of a grammatical system of speech behaviour (VanPatten & Lee, 1990).

ESL differs significantly from EFL in

- the socio-cultural contexts
- the quality and quantity of exposure,
- interactive modes and teaching methods (Nayar, 1997),
- learners' cognitive and psychological development (Gass, 1990).

Ellis (1984) describes the EFL classroom as a 'pure' classroom, where the learner depends on the teacher, the instructions and the textbooks for learning, in contrast to 'impure' ESL classrooms, where the learner has access to other experiences as a supplementary means of learning. In the 'pure' EFL classroom, the teacher's presentation of the language is expected to be well structured, systematic, coherent, and form-focused (Gass, 1990). Enculturation and socialisation takes place, if it takes place at all, in students' imaginary worlds and in their creative associations and inferences.

Teachers from an ESL background may encounter more constraints in EFL contexts than in ESL contexts, and they may find it difficult to cope with the different student and institutional needs and expectations. In the EFL classroom, teaching and pedagogical innovations, such as the adoption of the communicative approach, are

constrained by many local cultural paradigms. Teaching is often subject to the objectives of the host institution, and thus EFL teachers do not have as much freedom as ESL teachers in experimenting with and implementing the teaching approaches that they are familiar with. It is the teachers who have to try to adapt to the culture of learning of the students' society; whereas in ESL situations it is the students who have to adapt to the culture of learning of the teachers' society. Teachers' cultural values, beliefs and role identities are challenged in the EFL classroom, where expatriate teachers ride their linguistic horse on the unmarked and unsighted terrains of another culture (Nayar, 1989). It is therefore important for ESL teachers to adjust their previously held beliefs, role identities and role expectations to match as closely as possible those of the students and of the host institutions.

Awareness of the ESL-EFL distinction may enable EFL teachers to adopt appropriate teaching methods and play their roles as teachers in ways that are meaningful and satisfying to both students and expatriate teachers. In Nayar's (1997) opinion, the blurring of the ESL-EFL differences is 'not academically or pedagogically advantageous' (p. 27). Acknowledging the apparent differences will allow ESL teachers to predict and prepare for the challenge in EFL communication situations, where they have little control over the content of role expectations that they are pressured to meet. ESL teachers need to be aware that pedagogies are cultural products. It would be pedagogically naive to directly transplant models developed in ESL contexts to an EFL context, where learners' learning objectives, goals and environments are different. For example, the learner participation discourse which is considered to be very popular in ESL situations, is not appreciated in Chinese EFL situations (to be examined in the next section). There is no

such thing in language teaching as the 'master key' that would solve all problems. Situated teaching – teaching to the demands of situations – is what is needed in intercultural classroom communication.

The learner participation discourse

A central characteristic of expatriate teachers' teaching in China is the learner participation discourse, which favours conversational styles of interactive teaching. This style of teaching emphasises students' participation in the form of pair and group work and group discussions or debates. It is based on the rationale that such classroom activities can

- provide opportunities for oral fluency
- encourage co-operation and exchange of ideas
- create a more democratic learning atmosphere
- give learners a sense of responsibility for their own learning
- involve learners in meaning-focused rather than form-focused classroom interactions.

The literature indicates that the discourse has been directly transplanted into and practised in the Chinese classroom by expatriate teachers. The survey data suggests that 81.9% of expatriate teachers reported using group activities, role-plays, debates and discussion as major forms of classroom activity. Only 18.2% of them claimed that they had spent some time lecturing. To most expatriate teachers, structured lectures would be seen as a hindrance rather than a help to students' learning and intellectual development.

The ability to organise interactive activities appears to have become a touchstone of teaching quality for expatriate teachers and a symbol of modernisation. They firmly believe that learning cannot take place without engaging in physically interactive activities, ignoring the fact that Chinese students can interact mentally using an analytical and reflexive approach (Cortazzi & Lin, 1996; Rao, 2001).

As students' success in learning is measured by the degree and scope of participation, students are in fact forced to conform to the teachers' prescribed 'classroom cultural régime' (Holliday, 1997, p. 410). The discourse turns teachers into 'oppressors' or 'dictators' and students into the 'oppressed', and therefore the pedagogy becomes the pedagogy of oppression rather than that of the oppressed (Freire, 1990). Resistance becomes highly likely when norms to which role identities and role expectations are anchored are violated. There is a huge disparity between expatriate teachers' intentions in their pedagogical enactment and students' interpretations of the meanings based on their frame of reference. The following discussion will outline and discuss some of the key issues related to the discourse.

The oral discourse versus the written discourse

The Chinese tradition pays much more attention to written discourse than to oral discourse. One of the reasons that expatriate teachers' teaching in China was lambasted for being 'unsystematic', 'disorganised', 'shallow', 'unstructured', and 'irresponsible' might be the fact that expatriate teachers put much emphasis on oral discourse and seem to ignore the importance of written discourse.

Chinese students are accustomed to text-oriented teaching modes and to quantifiable measurement of their progress. It seems to them that systematic knowledge is embedded in the textbook and can be transmitted to the students through the teacher's careful and well-planned delivery. Many students reported that expatriate teachers did not use textbooks, because textbooks were seen as an obstacle to teachers' classroom creativity and spontaneity in interactive classes. Learning without textbooks gave students a sense of insecurity and anxiety. Teaching without any handouts or texts denied the students the opportunity to use a visual picture of linguistic and lexical forms and thus constrained their linguistic internalisation.

Chinese emphasis on the use of textbooks and visual processing (rather than verbal skills) in learning may be associated with Chinese orthography (Mandarin), in which form and meaning are closely related and readers' comprehension relies heavily on visual spatial information in the printed texts (Chen, 1996). According to Hoosain (1986), Chinese students' visual discrimination and spatial conceptualisation are better than their verbal ability. The oral discourse, without any or enough visual backup, puts Chinese students at a disadvantage and results in confused and anxious learners (Rao, 2001).

In addition, Chinese students tend to adopt an analytic and reflective approach in learning English (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). This approach emphasises reflection, precision, concretisation, sequence, and in-depth and logical analyses and dissection of the course material students are expected to learn, or have learned, in class. The content includes grammar, vocabulary, collocations, figures of speech, rhetoric, styles, syntax, morphology, phonology, discourse, metaphors, literary conventions, and poetics. They want to explore every aspect of the language, searching for perfection, and they are

intolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty (Rao, 2001). The oral discourse that encourages students' tolerance of ambiguity becomes incompatible with this approach. However, not many expatriate teachers appreciate such learning styles because language is in many ways arbitrary rather than logical.

Most ESL teachers are trained to teach very basic English in ESL contexts, such as general English, English for IELTS (International English Language Testing Service) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), rather than highly advanced English for English majors in EFL contexts. The survey data shows that not all ESL teachers know how to dissect and analyse their own language and therefore the participation discourse becomes these teachers' major teaching mode. The discourse emphasises very narrow aspects of language (some basic oral and linguistic skills) but ignores the fact that the Chinese students learn English more as a disciplinary subject than as a communication instrument. Chinese students were often disappointed with expatriate teachers who treated them like pre-teens by using course materials appropriate for pre-school or primary school children in their home countries and by forcing them to engage in conversation. The existing level of linguistic competence among Chinese students was rarely acknowledged. Most felt they had been cheated and humiliated.

At an advanced stage, the students want something new, something more advanced, more interesting, more challenging and more theoretical than endless conversations and discussions. Freed (1990) points out that those 'who have more or less mastered the language of daily activities profit less ... from oral/social interaction' (p.473). A high level of language proficiency may not be reached without a sizeable and meaningful linguistic and cultural intake (Wang, 1986) and without an 'i +1' input (linguistic input

that the learner has not yet acquired but is ready to acquire) (Krashen, 1991, p. 409). Insistence on the participation discourse at this stage may cause a crisis of fossilisation in learning (which means that the students' language proficiency remains where it is and cannot accommodate any new input and any changes) or 'the post-intermediate void' (Nakuma, 1995). Discovering the appropriate 'i + 1' to fill the void requires expatriate teachers' professional expertise, and careful study and exploration of students' existing levels of language proficiency, the culture of learning, and students' learning needs as perceived by the students.

Autonomy and creativity

The participation discourse emphasises the importance of spontaneous classroom communication and students' autonomy. The survey data indicates that the expatriate teachers put too much emphasis on the learning process and spontaneity, neglecting students' feelings, attitudes, expectations, and responses. The Chinese students felt that expatriate teachers' emphasis on classroom spontaneity was totally disorganised and that teachers did not seem to have any careful planning or purpose in teaching. To the Chinese students, the teaching seemed to lack structure. Teachers relying heavily on conversational styles were generally regarded as irresponsible or ineffective and students felt they had learned almost nothing.

The participation discourse, according to some expatriate teachers, could help change the Chinese students' 'passive' and 'uncreative' learning patterns. Their observations of Chinese students' 'passivity' and 'uncreativeness', however, were the

result of their interpretation based on their own cultural values, beliefs and stereotypes. The irony is that the labelling suggests that the labellers themselves were passive and not creative enough to find appropriate ways to avoid the discourse and cater for the learning needs of the students.

Creativity is not a simple matter. Creativity involves past experience, domain-specific knowledge, and the restructuring and intelligent use of prior knowledge (Smith, Ward, & Finke, 1995). Creativity does not come 'out of the blue', nor does it come from one particular way of teaching. Quinn, Anderson and Finkelstein (1996, p. 72) rank creativity as the highest of four points of professional intellect:

- cognitive knowledge (know-what)
- advanced skills (know-how)
- systems understanding (know-why)
- self-motivated creativity (care-why).

What is suggested here is that creativity is self-motivated rather than taught or imposed. The primary source of creativity is the self (Stryker & Statham, 1985). Research indicates that the greater the role expectations are, the less the chance of creativity (Goslin, 1969). Forcing students to conform to the teacher's discourse without considering students' actual needs – linguistic knowledge and skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, communication) and systems understanding (of the language) – can only stifle students' creative potential, despite the belief that teachers targeted their teaching at developing Chinese students' creative potential.

Expatriate teachers' attempts to give students autonomy and responsibility for their own learning were perceived by the Chinese students as abandonment of the students and

an abdication of responsibility, and as a failure to fulfil their expected roles. The participation discourse contradicts the Chinese role culture where the teacher is held responsible for students' learning. The role confusion tended to demotivate rather than motivate students, and to make them feel negative about the learning tasks set by expatriate teachers. The teachers' culture of teaching and the students' culture of learning diverged so sharply that there did not seem to be any converging point. Neither expatriate teachers nor Chinese students seemed to be aware that conflicts deriving from disparities in role identities and role expectations had prevented them from crossing the cultural divide. Both groups seemed to be locked in their own narrow definition of their prescribed roles.

Chinese social contexts are likely to prevent expatriate teachers from using group work and discussions as successful teaching modes. The teacher's discourse fails to recognise the fact that there is a fierce competition among Chinese students in a society where examination scores count at almost every stage of their student life (Kelen, 2002). The ownership of knowledge is perceived by Chinese students as vital in asserting self-identity and achieving self-fulfilment. Students are driven by their achievement motivations (Biggs, 1996) or Confucian dynamics in gaining their social identity (Hofstede, 1991). Unlike individualistic cultures, whose need for distinctiveness is met through self-asserting actions, personal distinction in collectivist societies is achieved through pursuit of excellence by setting very high ideals of performance. The socially approved achievement motivation provides the primary impetus for individuals to strive for a high level of achievement, though not all of them can reach the target. The discourse that emphasises learner participation and learner autonomy is regarded as

unrelated to their expectations of increasing the linguistic, literary and cultural knowledge essential for their individual success in the competitive class. Students expect classroom conformity, where they can presumably find justice, impartiality and fairness in uniform classroom activities (such as lectures) in which all share the same source of information. It would be considered unfair and undemocratic if the teacher, the perceived authority-expert, gave some special support or attention to one particular group and ignored the other.

Teaching competence

What emerges from the above discussion is that some expatriate teachers lack communication skills in dealing with common issues of classroom communication, issues related to teachers' professionalism, appropriate teaching methods, and cultural understanding. Of course, there is no simple approach to addressing the problems raised in the previous discussions. What is important is expatriate teachers' ability to communicate with their students.

It can be argued that a good language teacher is also a good communicator. Good communicative teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject they teach, a repertoire of methods, and a systematic understanding of the cultural issues surrounding intercultural communication, which enable them to help students to acquire the knowledge. In my view, as a language teacher in intercultural settings, expatriate teachers need to develop their language skills, and their cultural and pedagogical awareness.

Language awareness

The research literature in language learning and teaching has provided theoretical and pedagogical insights into the constructs of 'consciousness-raising' (Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1985), 'language awareness' (Wright & Bolitho, 1993, 1997), 'explicit' and 'implicit' instruction (Ellis, 1994), and 'form-focused instruction' (Spada, 1997). ESL and EFL learners are expected to be able to encode and decode messages of communication, to process, to comprehend, to store, and to retrieve these messages for communicative use (Pica, 1995); that is, they are expected to be aware of, and to be able to analyse, the language system, and to use it communicatively (Widdowson, 1992). If learners are required to acquire an ability to analyse the language and to understand the operating system of the language, there is no doubt that teachers must be competent in this area themselves. It is reasonable to expect language teachers to be aware of the language system and of the actual process of *what* teachers do in the classroom, *how* they do it and *why* they do it. Language awareness will enable teachers to adopt appropriate teaching methods to help students achieve learning objectives.

Being a native speaker is not necessarily a license to teach the language. A language teacher requires specific training. Not all native speakers know the operating systems of their language. In teaching, it is the teacher's linguistic expertise, rather than their speech competence, that will facilitate language learning. Language teachers need relevant expertise, skills, and knowledge to allow them to accomplish tasks such as

- lesson planning
- learner needs assessment

- creation of teaching content
- materials selection
- syllabus and curriculum designing
- assessment of learner performance.

An untrained and unqualified native speaker who has some degree of literacy may not have the language awareness that is essential in language teaching. *One's ability to speak the language does not guarantee that one is competent in teaching the language.*

The Chinese confusion of user competence with teacher competence and 'the native-speaker-ideal fallacy' have led to the flow of unqualified teachers into the ELT profession and have done serious damage to the reputation of expatriate teachers in China. The survey data indicates that 58.5% of the expatriate teachers in China did not have relevant qualifications. Some of them had been trained for a couple of weeks and had been given by the trainers a 'bag of tricks' to help them teach their mother tongue. These teachers' linguistic and literary poverty may have resulted in their overuse of coping strategies such as games, group activities, discussions and debates.

My argument is that in intercultural classroom communication it is the course content that the teacher is required to communicate to students. If teachers do not know anything about the subject matter they teach, they have nothing to base their teaching on, and as a result they cannot communicate. Therefore, professional expertise becomes the top priority in classroom communication. In language teaching, a teacher's linguistic awareness (a thorough knowledge of the linguistic operating system) should be the prerequisite for being a language teacher.

Of course, being a language expert does not necessarily mean one can teach and communicate well. The teacher needs to develop both pedagogical and cultural awareness to successfully communicate his or her professional expertise to the students.

Pedagogical and cultural awareness

The acquisition of professional expertise does not guarantee successful teaching. Teachers should know not only *what* is to be taught but *why* and *how* that knowledge must be taught. They should develop pedagogical awareness and have a thorough understanding of teaching and learning theories and of educational philosophies that can guide them to deliver the subject matter effectively to students.

Teaching and learning are culture-dependent. Pedagogical transfer involves the transfer of teachers' cultural values, beliefs, assumptions, concepts of learning and teaching. Teachers enact pedagogies based on their epistemological beliefs, professional ideology and interpretative systems. The accuracy of their perception and interpretation of the contexts are generally shaped by their cultural perspective. The degree of accuracy of interpretation, however, is subjective rather than objective. Problems can arise if the teachers and students come from different cultures, with different understandings of roles and sets of expectations stemming from their respective cultural values and beliefs. Role conflicts are likely to influence both teaching and learning outcomes. Yet pedagogic congruence is a crucial factor in determining the success or failure of teaching and learning. The diverse expectations of teachers and learners pose potential barriers to

successful teaching and learning, and this is especially true when the course participants fail to recognise these barriers.

Finding a pedagogic fit in an intercultural setting can be a problem for expatriate teachers. Once in the classroom, they are involved in a complex local cultural environment. Most expatriate teachers, not knowing the local culture and the local language, have to rely on the prior experiences and belief systems about teaching and learning that they have acquired from their home cultures, in order to interpret their teaching tasks, the course content, and teacher-student relationships and to identify students' learning needs and expectations in the foreign culture. The interpretations they make, generally based on personal perceptions, can often be misleading and problem-inducing. The central issue in pedagogical disparities is the powerful influence of interpretative discourse. What is suggested here is that in intercultural communication it is not enough for teachers to master the subject matter and a range of teaching methods; *teachers' cultural awareness becomes crucial in implementing pedagogies in intercultural settings.*

Cultural awareness will enable teachers to engage in constant exploration, interpretation, negotiation, and reflection. This may help teachers to

- avoid rigidity and ritualised teaching behaviours
- adapt their teaching intuitively and flexibly to the needs of the students and the host institutions
- to acquire a deeper understanding of the student culture
- to play an appropriate role in the alien society
- create a synergetic culture where differences are respected.

It discourages cultural imposition, ethnocentrism, and dogmatism, and it encourages practitioners to be open, flexible, self-critical, empathetic, and adaptable. Expatriate teachers need to constantly examine their pedagogies to ensure their approaches are meaningful to the students. Teachers need pedagogic and cultural awareness to understand and deal with students' subjectivities, their cultural positions, their personal experiences, and the intricacies of different discourses in the local culture. Without such awareness, intercultural classroom communication will always remain a problem, the cultural divide may never be bridged, and a pedagogical fit may never be found.

Recommendations

The discussion above suggests that culture shapes conceptualisations of teaching and learning and role expectations. What is considered to be successful pedagogy in one culture may not achieve expected results when it is transferred to another. Pedagogical modifications, rather than a direct transplant, are extremely important to ensure a cultural 'match' or compatibility. To search for such a cultural 'match' requires expatriate teachers to

- develop an awareness of cultural issues in teaching English in another culture
- develop skills in intercultural communication to help them cope with all emerging issues inside and outside the classroom
- be competent to analyse the English language

- develop pedagogical competence to assist them in teaching in an alien environment
- have knowledge of a repertoire of teaching skills and methods
- adopt flexible, rather than 'fixed', teaching approaches
- learn the students' mother tongue to find out students' linguistic patterns and to adjust teaching to their needs
- have an empathetic attitude to their students
- be willing enough to learn from local teachers.

To sum up, expatriate teachers must have a thorough knowledge of the language operating system that they teach. In terms of teaching, the teachers' ability to analyse the language becomes more important than their ability to speak it. Apart from such an analytical ability, the teacher must be pedagogically competent. Finally, cultural literacy (a good knowledge of the host country's cultural values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes) will enhance the teacher's teaching competence.

This study was based mainly on two data-collecting instruments: questionnaires and interviews. Although most views expressed in the interviews provided supporting evidence for this study, how validly these views reflected the reality remains unclear, because it was difficult for the researcher to determine how much truth was contained in the stories told by the informants. It is recommended that classroom observations be undertaken to ensure the validity and reliability of the given stories.

The study has revealed an inverse correlation between 'Western' teaching styles used by expatriate teachers and students' satisfaction. It is particularly advisable that a

longitudinal study be undertaken to observe the development of the attitudes of the Chinese students and expatriate teachers, to identify how different forces combine to influence teaching and learning.

The data of this research was collected in China and it reflects more or less the Chinese students' perceptions of the teaching of expatriate teachers in the Chinese cultural contexts. It would be illuminating and practical to conduct a parallel research in an English-speaking country where English is taught as a second language (ESL). The outcome of the research may provide insights to teachers teaching English to speakers of other languages within their own cultural context.

Conclusion

This paper, based on the survey data, reviewed the issues of cultural influences upon role identity and role expectations in intercultural settings. It was argued that in intercultural communication, especially in language teaching, conflicts in roles and role expectations are highly likely because teachers and students do not share the same cultural values and beliefs, which shape their role concepts, attitudes, and expectations. It was suggested that although expatriate teachers' contribution to ELT in China is positively acknowledged, there are cultural barriers for expatriate teachers in implementing their pedagogies in China. These barriers may have caused communication problems and Chinese students' negative perceptions of the imposed pedagogies. It was argued that cultural constraints might have prevented expatriate teachers from transferring Western pedagogies to the Chinese classroom. These constraints include Chinese concepts of teachers' roles and the

role confusion manifest in the introduced pedagogies. It was also suggested that language teachers in intercultural settings need to develop communication skills as teaching professionals, especially in language, pedagogies and culture, to enable them to understand their roles and the expectations of the host culture, to cross the cultural divide, and to find a pedagogical fit in the EFL contexts.

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	E-Mail Address: limingsh@paradise.net.nz Date: 4 April 2003

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